

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 AID-05 IGA-02 /093 W  
-----109744 151413Z /43

R 151239Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5608  
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 5464

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR PINS ET SO US UR  
SUBJ: SOVIET AMBASSADOR ON OGADEN CONFLICT

REF: ADDIS ABABA 5358

1. SOVIET AMBASSADOR RATANOV TOOK INITIATIVE TO DISCUSS  
OGADEN SITUATION WITH AF/E DIRECTOR POST DURING SEPT 13  
RECEPTION HOSTED BY ETHIOPIAN FONMIN IN HONOR THIRD  
ANNIVERSARY ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION. RATANOV APPROACHED POST  
WHILE LATTER WAS IN CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR  
FOR AMERICAN AFFAIRS BERHANE DERESSE. RATANOV INTRODUCED POST  
TO VISITING SEC GEN OF SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRY IGOR  
N, EJOV AND THEN INAUGURATED OGADEN DISCUSSION WITH BOTH  
BERHANE DERESSA AND SOVIET MOFA OFFICIAL AS AUDIENCE,  
PAUSING TO PROVIDE TRANSLATION TIME FOR LATTER'S INTER-  
PRETER. WASHINGTON POST'S DAVID OTTAWAY, NEW YORK TIMES'  
KAUFMAN, NEWSWEEK'S DAVID PRINGLE AND OTHER JOURNALISTS  
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SPOTTED ENCOUNTER AND MADE ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL  
EFFORTS TO EAVESDROP.

2. RATANOV'S MESSAGE TO THE EFFECT THAT FIGHTING IN  
THE OGADEN WAS CLEAR CASE OF SOMALI AGGRESSION AND THAT  
ALL COUNTRIES INTERESTED IN ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEG-  
RITY SHOULD MADE EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT SOMALI WITH-

DRAWAL FROM OGADEN AND A CEASEFIRE (IN THAT ORDER). POST SAID THAT US WAS CERTAINLY ONE OF THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH SUPPORTED OAU PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SUGGESTED THAT SOVIET UNION MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT PRINCIPLE BEFORE PROCEEDING TO ARM SOMALIA WELL BEYOND ANY LEGITIMATE REQUIREMENTS FOR SELF-DEFENSE. RATANOV COUNTERED THAT US AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE ARMS TO SOMALIA HAD BEEN MOST UNTIMELY. POST RESPONDED THAT US HAD ONLY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO HELP FILL GAPS WHICH MIGHT DEVELOP IN SOMALIA'S DEFENSIVE STRUCTURE FOR THE DEFENSE OF ITS EXISTING INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED FRONTIERS. RATANOV CONGRATULATED US FOR CLEVERNESS IN FORMULATING ITS POLICY BUT INSISTED THAT TIMING OF US AGREEMENT HAD BEEN UNSETTLING. POST POINTED OUT THAT US HAD MADE NO DELIVERIES OF ARMS TO SOMALIA AND, WHEN OGADEN SITUATION ERUPTED, HAD ANNOUNCED THAT ITS AGREEMENT WITH SOMALIA COULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED WHILE OGADEN IN FLAMES. SOVIET UNION, IN CONTRAST, HAD NOT ONLY STIMULATED SOMALI MOVE ON OGADEN BY EXCESSIVE SUPPLIES OF ARMS BUT HAD CONTINUED SUPPLYING ARMS TO BOTH SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA AFTER OGADEN WARFARE STARTED. RATANOV CLAIMED THAT SOVIETS HAD STOPPED DELIVERIES TO SOMALIA IN AUGUST WHICH POST CHALLENGED AS CONTRARY TO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO USG. RATANOV SAID THAT, IN ANY CASE, NOW WAS TIME FOR ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN ETHIOPIA'S PRESERVATION TO ACT TO DENY SOMALIA FRUITS OF AGGRESSION. POST REPLIED THAT US WAS CERTAINLY PREPARED

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TO DO WHAT IT COULD TO RESTORE PEACE IN THE AREA BUT, NOT BEING A SUPPLIER OF ARMS TO EITHER SIDE, HAD LITTLE INFLUENCE TO BRING TO BEAR.

3. AFTER CONCLUSION ABOVE EXCHANGE, BERHANE DERESSA REMARKED TO POST THAT HE FELT AS IF HE HAD BEEN THE FILLING BETWEEN PIECES OF BREAD IN A SANDWICH.

4. COMMENT: RATANOV CAME CLOSE TO PROPOSING JOINT US-USSR EFFORTS TO BRING OGADEN FIGHTING TO AN END. PRESENCE OF HIS FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SEC GEN MAKES IT CERTAIN THAT HE WAS EITHER SPEAKING ON INSTRUCTIONS OR AT LEAST WAS OPERATING WITHIN APPROVED POLICY GUIDELINES. HIS APPROACH MAY HAVE REPRESENTED INITIAL PROBING TO TEST POSSIBILITY OF ASSOCIATING US WITH USSR IN AN EFFORT TO END OGADEN FIGHTING ON ETHIOPIA'S TERMS. SOVIET AIM WOULD PRESUMABLY BE TWO-FOLD: (1) TO PRESERVE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE OF THE USSR'S NEWLY-ACQUIRED ASSET IN AFRICA, SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA; AND (2) TO ENSURE THAT THE US, BY BEING ASSOCIATED WITH THE USSR'S EFFORT TO DEPRIVE SOMALIA IF ITS ILL-GOTTEN OGADEN GAINS, WILL NOT SECURE A NET ADVANTAGE OVER THE SOVIETS IN MOGADISCIO.

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE USE DEVELOP A COUNTER-STRATEGY AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE JOURNALISTS PRESENT MAY REPORT THE INCIDENT AS A SOVIET PROPOSAL TO END THE FIGHTING WHICH WAS RECEIVED COOLY BY THE US. ELEMENTS OF SUCH A COUNTER-STRATEGY MIGHT INCLUDE SOME REFERENCE TO: (A) THE UNDESIRABILITY OF SUPERPOWERS MEDDLING IN INTER-AFRICAN DISPUTES EITHER AS STIMULATORS OF CONFLICT, THROUGH EXCESSIVE SUPPLIES OF WEAPONS BEYOND LEGITIMATE DEFENSIVE NEEDS, OR TRYING TO EXTRACT ADVANTAGE FROM AFRICAN MISERY BY POSING AS PEACEMAKERS; (B) THE ROLE OF PEACEMAKER IS BEST LEFT TO AFRICANS WHO HAVE CREATED AN ORGANIZATION, THE OAU, DESIGNED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

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## Message Attributes

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